

Master's in elementary ed available online at WKU

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Western Kentucky University is offering an incentive to elementary education graduates looking to complete their master's degrees at the university.

Starting this fall, teachers and elementary education grads looking to earn masters in elementary education can take the degree program online, said Tabitha Daniel, head of the department of curriculum and instruction.

Daniel said an "exciting aspect" of the program is that WKU elementary education grads do not have to take the GRE and have a qualifying score to be admitted to the graduate studies program.

These students can enter the graduate program after obtaining their undergraduate degree, she said.

Jessica Carney, a teacher at Dishman-McGinnis Elementary School, said when she started working on her master's three years ago, she spent a lot of time studying for the GRE while teaching her first year.

"So I think it takes a lot of stress off of graduates starting their first year of teaching," she said of not having to take the GRE.

While there have been online courses in elementary education for years, now teachers seeking their master's can get everything they need online, Daniel said.

"A couple of teachers here (at Dishman-McGinnis) didn't have time to take classes so they got their master's online through the University of Phoenix," Carney said. "I think teachers would jump to this opportunity. It's great because it is convenient for teachers to work around their schedules, meetings and other activities outside of school ... so this is a wonderful opportunity."

While Carney, a WKU graduate, is getting her master's in elementary education with a concentration in counseling, the online degree program is for those looking to complete their master's in elementary education, Daniel said.

Daniel said the pilot program will be monitored to help determine how it can become a success.

In addition to the master's in elementary education, the university will also offer a master's in history, a bachelor's of interdisciplinary studies, an associate's in interdisciplinary studies and an associate's in office systems technology, said Cindy Troutman, distance learning program specialist.

"Our hope is to make education more accessible to more people," Troutman said. "It's Western's way of breaking down those barriers that keep people from coming back to school."

Troutman said there has been a lot of growth in people taking online courses. She said more professors are becoming more engaged in offering online courses, giving their students more flexibility.

"It lets them work around family obligations and work obligations," Troutman said.

Tuition for undergraduate courses online is \$349 per credit hour; for graduate courses, it's \$458 per credit hour.

— For information about the new online master's elementary education program, call 745-2615. For information about online courses and programs available at WKU, call 745-5173 or go to www.wku.edu/online.